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# Making Core Values Make Sense

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Core values is very important within the military community. The Department of Defense holds the annual Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics to discuss the implications of ethics on the military services. Core Values is always a featured topic, because of its focus on the articulation of ethical codes within the military. Academic papers are submitted for presentation to the conference, by all of America's armed services, the Coast Guard, and armed services from other friendly nations.

Core values establishes a common set of expectations of conduct for all members. The meaning and power of the values CAP has chosen: INTEGRITY, VOLUNTEER SERVICE, EXCELLENCE, and RESPECT are easily inferred by all who read them. These words effectively replace dozens of pages of directives, and simply articulate what's right and what's wrong, and form a tool by which conduct is measured. They are the embodiment of how CAP members are expected to treat each other and the people they come in contact with -- of man's expectations of fellow man.

You expect the people you do business with to be honest with you (integrity), or you don't do business with them. You expect them to go out of their way to meet your needs (volunteer service). You expect quality and reliability from their products (excellence). And, you expect them to recognize and appreciate the fact that you don't have to buy from them (respect) if they provide a poor level of service. The application of core values into daily life is just as easily applied to personal relationships, dealings at school, and time at play with other people.

Now let's consider unit applications. Would you want a commander who looked out for their own welfare before that of the unit? If you are a commander, how long would you tolerate a staff officer or member who stole from unit dues, cheated on a test, or lied to you about the status of a project? Would a breach of integrity have to be that serious before you decided to take action? If you did not take action, what kind of message about integrity would YOU be sending to other unit members?

If you are a regular unit member, would you try to do what's best for the unit, even if meant some inconvenience? How about something minor, like giving up a Saturday to take cadets on a field trip. How about something not so minor, like going out at 0200 on a cold January morning to search for an ELT, even though you know with 99% certainty that it would be a false alarm. How would you know it WASN'T real? You can see the implications of volunteer service.

How do you feel when you know your job better than anyone else and you deliver the goods every single time? How do you feel when you are just learning the job, are challenged and try your best, and succeed? How do you feel when you are the best, coast on an assignment, just go through the motions, and make a mistake you KNEW didn't need to occur? Would you agree that excellence means perhaps not being the best at something, but giving it everything you have regardless?

Which commander would you rather work for: someone who inspires you, appreciates the work you do, is calm and fair, and shows that appreciation to you and others? Or would you rather work for a commander who is quick tempered and doesn't control it, doesn't have a clue about what you are doing, EXPECTS respect though you know they have little respect for you, and relies on intimidation to achieve results? Which type of commander would you rather be?

Core values has very real implications. It is not a vague concept or a mantra to be repeated in hopes that someday it'll catch on. Core values -- CAP's or any other -- requires a cultural commitment to decency, a personal commitment to treat others as you would like to be treated, and an organizational commitment to deliver services of the quality that you would expect to have for yourself. Core values require that you do the best you can to embody its principles, even, as former Air Force Chief of Staff General Ronald Fogleman said, "when no one else is watching."

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